



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 50

South of England Group

June 2008

Vice Presidents - Alan Pegler OBE, FRSA; Sir William McAlpine Bt, FRSE, FCIT, FRSA

Be "Safe" Men! Making Railway Workers Safe, 1900-1939

Seventeen members were present when Mike Esbester, of Reading University, gave a talk based on his PhD thesis covering the development of the Railway Companies to promote a safety culture amongst their workers. Mike became interested while looking through company magazines during his Masters at the Institute of Railway Studies. He noticed several articles on safety and wanted to find out when this started and why.

In the 19th century the general approach of the country was that people were responsible for their own safety - with the singular exception of railway passenger safety. Here the State felt it appropriate to have statutory regulation because passengers were not in a position to take charge of their own safety. Accidents were, even then, front page news - the impact of the press on politicians is nothing new! Accidents to employees were of little interest and mostly happened out of sight of the public, press and politicians. After 1890 the trade unions began to flex their muscles and pushed that more attention be given to workers' safety. Their activity resulted in the first Parliamentary Act covering workers' safety which was introduced in 1900. However, the impact was minor.

The accident statistics, collated by the Board of Trade, between 1900-1913 showed an annual average of 17,000 people injured each year with the trend being upward; in 1913 a total of 30000 workers suffered some form of accident. Even hard-hearted business managers couldn't ignore this, especially when it was costing money. The GWR, for example, paid out £13,000 in compensation, equivalent to well over £1M in today's money - and that didn't include the cost of the lost working time. The problem was how to reconciling the business of operating the railway at lowest cost and improving safety of the workers so that a) the costs were reduced and b) Government were persuaded to keep their noses out of the business of running the railway. This was the catalyst that brought about the idea of safety

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education. The GWR was the first to take action, quickly followed by the other railways, during the course of 1913. Until this point, the companies had relied on their rulebooks. The typical rulebook was not particularly approachable for the average literate worker - and for those who couldn't read, it was a closed book! The layout was full of closely spaced text and read as a top-down lecture from senior management in legalistic language. As most injuries were to manual workers with limited reading ability, the GWR 1913 promotional programme addressed them using photographs, bold headlines with simple messages and attractive layout as an insert in the company magazine. More novel ideas followed - italics, upper case and even letters on their side. However, the magazine was charged at 1d, and only 40 copies were sold for every 100 workers. Also other articles in the magazine were probably more interesting! By 1914, the GWR were aware of the lack of penetration, so reprinted the safety articles in booklet form for issue to all workers without charge. Eight booklets were produced before 1939. Other novelties followed all bearing safety slogans - a token in the form of a coin, safety pendants, matchboxes, and cinema presentations in special coaches. A crossword was published in 1925 with BE SAFE MEN as the blocked parts - this was only a year after crosswords were generally introduced. GWR waived copyright on the 1914 booklet so other companies could follow and 700,000 booklets were distributed before 1939.

Why did the change happen in 1913? Probably recognition of the economic benefit of education compared to alternative of introducing expensive technical safety changes, such as automatic couplings. External pressure

also played a part, from trade unions and government. A government committee was finally established in May 1914 and the companies used the education programme as evidence of their action and that the companies could be left to manage their own business. They claimed savings of hundreds of workers accidents as a result of the campaign.

This argument was accepted since the perceived wisdom was that accidents were an inevitability of work, and that it was the employees who must change their approach not the company. It was the company's responsibility to promote safety and the employees were responsible for their own action in putting the advice into practice. Work colleagues were responsible for avoiding putting each others in danger. However, the companies continued to push for improved efficiency, and did not provide any financial support for the employees to put the advice into practice.

Did it work? The casualty figures did decline from 1919 to 1937 but were also effected by other factors, e.g. reduced working hours and practices. Employees may also have been unwilling to report accidents. The trade unions were in favour of safety education and push for more whenever they saw unsafe practices. The government followed this lead, the chief railway inspector making repeated calls for more safety education. This also meant that further safety legislation was avoided. Other businesses saw the benefits of this, London Omnibus followed in 1916 and the approach was in general use in factories by the 1930s. Ultimately, safety education permeating society's conscious and resulted in the founding of the Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents in 1941. Which is where Mike ended his story.

1968 AND ALL THAT

By 1968, the need for change on the BR network had become essential. BR had to accept that some traditions had to go. Steam traction was no longer viable for normal operations, the day of the pick-up goods and loose coupled wagons had passed and the passengers were looking to faster services. The "1968 and all that" event at the NRM illustrated this with examples of the locomotive power of the period. The central character was N° 70013 *Oliver Cromwell*, hero of the 1968 "Fifteen Guinea" special. This was the final steam special run by BR, but opened the way to the use of steam traction for recreational travel, led by the efforts of Alan Pegler and *Flying Scotsman*.

Swindon-built N° 92220 *Evening Star*, the last steam locomotive built by BR, was partnered by *Trangkil N° 4*, the last steam locomotive built in UK by industry. The latter caused some discussion with its chime whistle and the use of a Hackworth valve motion - harking back to the very earliest days of steam locomotive. Whilst *Evening Star* was not in steam, *Trangkil N° 4* was providing rides in the yard.

The Class 14 "Teddy Bears" were built in 1964 as diesel replacements for the ubiquitous 0-6-0 on local goods services - a class of traffic which had already disappeared by 1968, taken over by the rise of the motor vehicle. After a very brief time in BR service, the class found its niche in industrial service. D9520 shared the operation of a standard gauge

passenger shuttle with Middleton Railway's *Sir Berkeley* and later the NCB austerity N° 49 (Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn, 1943). (There was no truth in the suggestion that the Teddy Bear was substituted on the Tuesday when it rained for the comfort of Ray Towell - *Sir Berkeley* has only a spectacle plate. The change had been planned.)

The future was represented by D9009 *Alycidon*. Sadly, this was not running during the event. Was this because it would have upstaged the steam locomotives with its infamous "clag" or because its performance was too much for the restricted run available? It had, however, been used earlier to help with shunting the other exhibits.

Other locomotives present were N° 45593 *Kolhapur*, *The Great Marquess* in the guise of BR N° 61994, GCR O4 N° 63601, N° 30096 *Normandy* from the Southern, Super D N° 49395, Beattie well tank N° 30587, NER Q6 N° 63395 and *Clun Castle* N° 7029, the engine that started off the preservation era at Tyseley in 1968.

Finally, to illustrate the passing of yet another tradition, there were 2 dray horses - a reminder of the role the horse played in shunting and local delivery.

Members of the SoE Group helped man the FNRM Enterprises stand and the "Friends Lounge" - in reality the education coach.

Phil Brown

SUMMER OUTING

Don't forget about this year's summer outings. There are two. The first is on 12th July when the party will visit Amberley Industrial Museum. The second is to take place on 20th September for a

visit to the private Statfold Barn Railway near Tamworth. Details were included in the last *Briefing*, but if you wish to join the party and haven't already told Les Butler, please get in touch with him - see back page for contact details.

SPANISH PRACTICES



Tropical garden Atocha Station, Madrid



Talgo II Museo del Ferrocarril



John Jones 2-2-2 of 1863/4 with the Sharp Stewart 2-4-0T behind



1968 AND ALL THAT



FNRM Enterprises stand (Phil Brown)



D9009, Alycidon



70013, *Oliver Cromwell* and
92220 *Evening Star*

Boys will be boys
Spanish model railway advertisement
ca 1935

Photo credit - Ian Harrison except where noted

SPANISH PRACTICES

Mrs Chairman and I recently had our first holiday in Spain (yes, I know we're slow off the mark - because we don't like the summer heat). We spent the time in Madrid and environs, giving an opportunity to visit the *Museo del Ferrocarril* and to use the RENFE services to journey to nearby places of interest such as Toledo, Segovia and El Escorial.

The *Museo del Ferrocarril* (the Spanish Railway Museum) is located in the former Delicias station (dating from 1880) and about ½ mile from the main Atocha Station. Atocha is remarkable in its own right in that the former train shed – very reminiscent of St Pancras – has been cleaned up and turned over to being an enormous tropical garden – certainly on a par with Kew Gardens – complete with a burgeoning population of terrapins. I didn't see any crocodiles, but I wouldn't have been surprised if I had! The trains have been pushed forward outside the Victorian train shed, just like at St Pancras but on a bigger scale, to give more platform and operating space. All passenger bags go through an airport type scanner – it was here that the bombs exploded a few years ago. There is an adjoining station for the *Cercanias* (local) trains as well as the Metro. Madrid has long since cracked the Crossrail problem – at least in the north-south direction – the *Cercanias* tunnels under the main dual carriageway through the city between Atocha and Chamartin Stations and carries a train every couple of minutes in each direction.

The *Museo* is very reminiscent of our *Locomotion* at Shildon (see the website at www.museodelferrocarril.org). There are just four roads but at the time of our visit only the outer ones were accessible. One of these is a line of steam locomotives and

the other coaching stock. The inner roads contain diesel and electric locomotives that we could only glimpse through the gaps. Rather frustrating really (the guide leaflet suggests that they can usually be seen). There is a static sectioned locomotive similar to *Ellerman Lines* at York and some interesting model layouts. There are some fascinating exhibits for UK visitors. The first steam locomotives in Spain seem to have been British built and later ones built in Spain or France under licence. There is a John Jones (†) 2-2-2 of 1863/4, a Sharp Stewart 2-4-0T of 1877 and a Babcock and Wilcox Pacific of 1930 built under licence in Bilbao. The *pièce de résistance* on the locomotive front is a “confederation” locomotive (4-8-4) that was returned to steam in 1987, but now is out of ticket. It must have been a marvellous sight in full flood. There are regular steam trains with wooden coaching stock (HSE please note) from Madrid to Aranjuez - but the website is a bit coy about the dates! Also of interest is an early “Talgo” articulated train from 1950, built in the USA. This comprises a diesel loco with a set of 5 small cars, adjacent cars being articulated on a single axle. The rear end is an observation saloon with delightful post-war curvaceous styling: just like Marilyn Monroe! This arrangement has an immediate and obvious drawback – it needs to be turned on a triangle after each run. Somewhat self-limiting, one might think! Interestingly, the Talgo system forms the basis for Spain's modern high speed trains, but they soon realised the error of their ways and now have power cars at each end, and of course, full size coaches. The Museum as a whole has the sort of atmosphere that the old York Museum had before 1975. One certainly began to appreciate just how lucky we are

to have the NRM. Also tacked on around the side is the National Museum of Science and Technology.

This is a small collection of rather ancient astronomical and scientific instruments and technical consumer goods from the 1930s-1980s. Interesting in its own way, but insignificant in relation to what you can see in “Albertopolis”: again, I felt very fortunate that we have so much to see in South Kensington.

We were very impressed by the trains we used on our visits out of Madrid. The line to Toledo has been rebuilt and straightened out with Alstom “Avante” trains in use on what seems to be a dedicated shuttle service. We also went to Segovia on the brand new “AVE” line which runs more or less straight through Segovia and on to Valladolid for the north coast, using Bombardier trains. I estimated one of the tunnels under the Sierra de Guadarrama to be about 16 miles long. Interestingly, the new station at Segovia on this line is literally in the middle of a field about 4km from the city. It must be reminiscent of the early days of railways here when a couple of miles from a town was “near enough”. But it’s quite bizarre to see this brand new large station just appear out of nothing. The benefit is that a journey that used to take about 2 hours has been reduced to 35 mins. And there is a guaranteed refund if the train is more than 15 mins late – UK TOCs please note!

I was struck by a somewhat bizarre example of the results of mixing old and new systems. I had noticed that the *Cercanias* in and around Madrid and the new high speed trains drive on the right. But when going to El Escorial we were on an older local train that switched sides as soon as it left the Madrid area. So presumably, all lines were once like us, driving on the left, and then they decided to go the other way once the new lines were constructed. It could get very confusing! Also very noticeable on the new lines was the extensive use of bi-directional running, especially to move ECS on the “wrong line”.

I was surprised to find that Madrid airport has no rail link at all. Given the enthusiasm with which railways are being built (and the Valladolid line is being extended south to Cordoba and Malaga) this looks like a no-brainer. Perhaps the Spanish Government is subject to the same lobby groups as our own over Heathrow. The Metro is beautifully clean and efficient, but awkward to use as all the lines radiate from the centre – so the proverbial trip to Birmingham involves visiting Beachy Head. But then, at €1.00 flat fare in the centre, you can’t complain too much – Mayor Boris please note.

So if your visits to Spain have only involved the tourist traps, Madrid can be recommended – but pick your time as it is pretty oppressive in summer.

Ian Harrison

† *Educational Note:*

Jones, John, William Street, Liverpool

John Jones had been a partner in Jones, Turner & Evans. When it ceased trading in 1852 he formed his own firm in 1853 and continued through to 1863 using the Viaduct Foundry numbers from 292 to 342. Most output went to Argentina.

OUTREACH

The stand was in attendance at the London Festival of Railway Modelling at Alexandra Palace on 29th and 30th March. We occupied our normal position at the front left hand side of the second hall. However, this year, because of some faults with the carpeting, the entry door opposite our stand was locked. This meant that we did not get our usual flow of visitors passing the stand, but even so attendance numbers were high, especially on the Saturday. The stand used a new display table and layout, allowing the range of used books and videos to be displayed on shelves at the lower side of the display. This proved very popular and, with the bequest of Brian Gilliam's videos, we had plenty of stock to sell. We had a good deal of interest in the new enamel advertising signs, and the FNRM locomotive guides sold steadily.

There was quite a lot of interest in the Prototype Deltic model, with several visitors noting that their models had

recently arrived, and several others eagerly awaiting theirs. Those that had received their models were impressed by the standard and were keen to know of the future plans of the Museum to produce other models of National Collection locomotives.

The planned events at the Museum drew questions and we provided handouts of the Spring Bank Holiday celebration of "1968 and all that". Quite a few visitors expected us to be carrying tickets, but unfortunately this had not proved possible.

Our next event will be the Napier event at Buckinghamshire Steam Centre, Quainton Road on 20th and 21st June, when we expect to have a lot of interest in Deltic memorabilia. We will then have a short break before the Autumn season is upon us. Meanwhile there will be a number of excursions hauled by NRM locomotives (see below) on which we plan to have a presence.

NRM LOCOMOTIVES IN THE SOUTH

A number of excursions are being planned to commence in the South of England, all starting from London. These are scheduled for haulage by BR Standard Pacific N^o 70013 *Oliver Cromwell* and SR *Sir Lamiel* in its BR guise as N^o 30777. The tours are promoted by Steam Dreams and further details are on their website at <http://www.steamdreams.com/> or telephone 01483 209888. The ones currently on offer are:

Date	Destination	Locomotive
Thu 24 Jul	Norwich	70013
Sat 26 Jul	Manchester	70013
Thurs 11 Sep	Salisbury, Bath and Bristol	70013
Sun 14 Sep	Salisbury and Exeter	70013
Sat 20 Sep	Norwich	70013
Wed 24 Sep	Canterbury	70013
Sat 11 Oct	Gloucester	30777
Wed 15 Oct	Oxford, Warwick & Stratford on Avon	30777

We are aiming to have a stand on board for the FNRM. If you are interested in helping man this on one of the runs, please contact Ian Harrison to check on the arrangements.

FOR CURRENT LIST OF FORTHCOMING LECTURES

See the Diary section of the web page at:

<http://www.nrmfriends-south.org.uk/Diary.html>

FOR CONTACTS IN FNRM SOUTH OF ENGLAND

GROUP:

See Contacts at main index:

<http://www.nrmfriends-south.org.uk/index.html>